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ABSTRACT

Work values influence economic productivity of individuals and families worldwide. Since Japan's recent technological and economic productivity and growth have been phenomenal, a study was conducted to compare contemporary Japanese men's and women's work related values and beliefs. Work values questionnaires were distributed to over 900 Japanese subjects and t-tests were used to test for differences between men and women. Both Japanese men and women were found to value cooperation among co-workers, to see a need for more leisure time, to feel uneasy when there was no work to be done, and to believe that work should benefit one's country and that education and hard work lead to success. Japanese men were found to believe more strongly than Japanese women that they should be loyal to their employer, reject offers of higher salaries from other potential employers, stay with the same employer until retirement, sacrifice self for the good of the company, and go to work early and stay late. They also tended to believe more strongly that competition between individuals within the same company is good, that money acquired easily is usually spent unwisely, that people who fail usually have not tried hard enough, and that students should work for good grades out of respect and honor for their parents. Japanese women believed more strongly that use of credit cards leads to careless spending. (Author/NB)

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Sex Differences in Japanese Work Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This research describes and compares contemporary Japanese men's and women's work related values and beliefs. Work values questionnaires were distributed to over 900 Japanese subjects and *t*-tests were used to test for differences between men and women. Both Japanese men and women were found to value cooperation among co-workers, to see a need for more leisure time, to feel uneasy when there is no work to be done, and to believe that work should benefit one's country and that education and hard work leads to success. Japanese men were found to believe more strongly than Japanese women that they should be loyal to their employer, reject offers of higher salaries from other potential employers, stay with the same employer until retirement, sacrifice self for the good of the company, and go to work early and stay late. They also tended to believe more strongly that competition between individuals within the same company is good, that money acquired easily is usually spent unwisely, that people who fail usually have not tried hard enough, and that students should work for good grades out of respect and honor for their parents. Japanese women believed more strongly that use of credit cards leads to careless spending. Findings are analyzed in terms of cultural traditions and change.

Sex Differences in Japanese Work Ethics

Work values influence if not determine economic productivity of individuals and families worldwide. In recent years, Japan's technological and economic productivity and growth has been phenomenal (Morishima, 1982; Morrow, 1983; Vogel, 1979). As a consequence, there is a growing interest and literature comparing American work values with Japanese work values (Engel, 1985; Hofstede, 1980; Maguire & Kroliczak, 1983).

Traditional Japanese work ethics emphasize respect for authority, group harmony, duty, loyalty, education, hard work, frugality, self-sacrifice, and asceticism (Morishima, 1982). Contemporary Japanese (men's) work values also appear to have dimensions of individualism and independence traditionally associated with American work ethics (Engel, 1985).

The literature tends to focus on traditional, as opposed to contemporary, Japanese work values, and assumes that the values of men adequately represent the values of women as well. Since American men and women have been found to differ in many of their work values (Agassi, 1982), research is needed to assess whether sex differences also exist among Japanese.

This research not only describes contemporary Japanese work values but also tests for sex differences and compares the work related values and beliefs of Japanese men and women.

Method

A Work Values questionnaire was designed to explore work related values, beliefs and attitudes. Items were designed to reflect not only traditional Japanese and Western work ethics but also contemporary management practices. The Protestant Ethic Scale (MacDonald, 1972; Mirels & Garrett, 1971) was included as a subset of items. Items offered a Likert scale response format: strongly agree to strongly disagree. After translation into Japanese, the questionnaire was compared with it's English equivalent by expert judges, "back translated" (Brislin, 1980) and revised to improve validity.

Work value questionnaires were distributed to over 900 Japanese men (N = 433) and women (N = 481). The mean age of Japanese men was 34 compared with 29 for women. Men had an average of 15 years of education, while women averaged 14 years of education. Eighty-nine percent of the men were employed compared with 61 percent of the women. While Men reported an average workday of 9 hours, women reported 8 hours. Both men and women reported working an average of 6 days per week.

Mean scores were calculated for each group on each item, and *t*-tests were used to test for differences between men and women.

Findings

The results are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3. Japanese men and women were found to differ significantly on 20 of 38 items.

Table 1 summarizes the results of comparisons of Japanese men and women's values related to group orientation and individualism. Significant differences were found on 9 of 16 items.

While both men and women tended to be patriotic, that is to want their work to serve their country (Item 1), no significant differences were found between the two groups.

In contrast to tradition, both Japanese men and women tended to be uncertain about or to reject values expressing loyalty to employer. Neither group believed that workers should stay with the same employer until retirement (Item 2), reject a job offer from another company (Item 3), or go to work early and stay late (Item 4). In each case, Japanese women valued loyalty to employer significantly less than did Japanese men.

While Japanese men tended to be uncertain, Japanese women tended to reject the traditional view that respect and honor for parents should motivate students to work hard for good grades in school (Item 5). Again, women were found to be significantly less traditional than were men.

Both groups tended to be uncertain whether one should take

an active part in all group affairs (Item 6), and to agree that cooperation with the work group was important to them (Item 7). No significant differences were found between men and women on these items.

Japanese men agreed signficantly more than did Japanese women that competition within the same company was good for all concerned (Item 8).

Neither group believed that individual freedom is more important than group solidarity (Item 9). Nevertheless, both groups tended to want work to provide opportunities for self-expression and personal growth (Item 10). No signficant differences were found between men and women on these items.

Both groups tended to reject the traditional belief that an employee should sacrifice him/her self for the good of the company (Item 11). Nevertheless, women tended to reject this traditional value significantly more than did men.

While both men and women tended to be uncertain whether "only those who depend upon themselves get ahead in life" (Item 12), they tended to agree that "to be superior, a man must stand alone" (Item 13).

Despite the traditional Japanese group orientation and high value placed on employment in large corporations, both groups tended to be uncertain about whether they preferred to work alone or in a group (Item 14), whether they would like to be their own bosses (Item 15), and whether they would rather be self-employed than be employed by a large corporation (Item 16). In each case,

men tended to be significantly more traditional than women on these items.

Table 2 summarizes the results of comparisons of Japanese men and women's values related to work motivation, education and attitude. Significant differences were found between men and women on 5 of 12 items.

While men tended to agree, women tended to be uncertain about whether they would want to work even if they were not paid (Item 1). Both groups tended to be uncertain about whether many workers have an inherent dislike for work and try to avoid it (Item 2).

Both Japanese men and women tended to agree that education leads to success and promotion in the world of work (Item 3) and that hard work is related to success (Item 4). No significant differences were found between men and women on these items. Similarly, both groups tended to believe that "if one works hard enough he is likely to make a good life for himself" (Item 5). On the other hand, there was a slight tendency for women, but not men, to agree that "hard work offers little guarantee of success" (Item 6). In the latter two cases, women were found to be signficantly less positive than men about the value of hard work.

Both men and women tended to be uncertain about whether the most difficult school courses are the most rewarding (Item 7). On the other hand, both groups agreed that "there are few satisfactions equal to the realization that one has done his best" (Item 8). No signficant differences were found between men

and women on these items.

While both men and women tended to be uncertain about whether a distaste for hard work reflects a weakness of character (Item 9) and whether most people who don't succeed are lazy (Item 10), men were significantly more willing to agree with the latter.

Both groups tended to be uncertain about whether people who fail have not tried hard enough (Item 11) and about whether enthusiasm is important in getting ahead (Item 12). In both cases, men tended to agree significantly more with these statements than did women.

Table 3 summarizes the results of comparisons of Japanese men and women's values related to asceticism, thrift, credit and leisure. Significant differences were found on 6 of 10 items.

While both men and women tended to be uncertain about whether self sacrifice results in personal success (Item 1), men tended to agree significantly more than women with this item.

Both men and women tended to agree that "life would have very little meaning if (one) never had to suffer" (Item 2). No signficant differences were found on this item.

While both men and women tended to be uncertain about whether "the self-made man is likely to be more ethical than the man born to wealth" (Item 3), women tended to agree with this idea significantly more than did men.

Although both men and women tended to agree that "money acquired easily (e.g., via gambling or speculation) is usually

spent unwisely" (Item 4), men agreed with this item signficantly more than did women.

While men tended to be uncertain, women tended to agree that "the credit card is a ticket to careless spending" (Item 5). Again, the two groups differed significantly on this item.

Inconsistent results were found on items relating to leisure. Both sexes were uncertain about whether "society would have fewer problems if people had less leisure time" (Item 6) and whether "most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusements" (Item 7). On the other hand, both men and women agreed that "people should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation" (Item 9), while men agreed significantly more than women that "life would be more meaningful if (they) had more leisure time" (Item 8).

Both groups tended to agree that they feel uneasy when there is little work to do (Item 10); and no sigificant differences were found between men and women on this item.

Conclusion

Generalizations from this study should take into account sampling limitations. There is no assurance that the subjects surveyed in this study on an availability basis adequately represent all Japanese men and women. They were solidly middle-class. Additional research is needed on larger samples wherein subjects are randomly selected from the whole population.

In summary, both Japanese men and women were found to value cooperation among co-workers, to see a need for more leisure time, to feel uneasy when there is no work to be done, and to believe that work should benefit one's country and that education and hard work leads to success. Japanese men were found to believe more strongly than Japanese women that they should be loyal to their employer, reject offers of higher salaries from other potential employers, stay with the same employer until retirement, sacrifice self for the good of the company, and go to work early and stay late. They also tended to believe more strongly that competition between individuals within the same company is good, that money acquired easily is usually spent unwisely, that people who fail usually have not tried hard enough, and that students should work for good grades out of respect and honor for their parents. Japanese women believed more strongly that use of credit cards leads to careless spending.

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Table 1: Japanese Sex Differences in Group and Individualistic Values

Group Orientation vs Individualism	Men (n = 433) Mean	Women (n = 481) Mean	t
1. It is important to me that my work serves my country, indirectly if not directly.	3.92	3.85	1.33
2. A worker should be loyal and stay with the same employer until retirement.	2.66	2.41	3.94***
3. Out of loyalty to my employer, I would reject a job offer from another company willing to pay a higher salary.	3.24	2.99	3.64***
4. Out of loyalty to employer, an employee should go to work early and stay late.	2.25	2.04	3.59***
5. Students should work for good grades out of respect and honor for their parents.	2.55	2.37	2.78**
6. One should take an active part in all group affairs.	3.21	3.27	-1.01
7. It is very important to me that I work with people who cooperate well with one another.	4.14	4.20	-1.30
8. Competition between individuals within the same company is good for all concerned.	3.79	3.42	6.44***
9. Individual freedom is more important than group solidarity.	2.88	2.76	1.93
10. It is very important to me that my work provide opportunities for self-expression and personal growth.	4.30	4.31	-0.19
11. An employee should sacrifice him/her self for the good of the company.	2.27	2.02	4.15***
12. Only those who depend upon themselves get ahead in life.	2.91	2.86	0.63
13. To be superior, a man must stand alone.	3.74	3.85	-1.68
14. I prefer to work alone rather than in a group.	3.11	2.95	2.51*
15. I would like to be my own boss.	3.44	3.17	4.80***
16. I would rather be self-employed than be employed by a large corporation.	3.34	3.21	1.97*

Note: Means were calculated from Likert scale scores, i.e., 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 2: Japanese Sex Differences in Work Values and Attitudes

Values of Work, Education, Attitude	Men (n = 433) Mean	Women (n = 481) Mean	t
1. I would want to do some kind of work even if I were not paid.	3.59	3.45	1.09
2. Many employees have an inherent dislike for work, and will avoid it if they can.	2.83	2.77	0.81
3. Education leads to success and promotion in the world of work.	3.66	3.74	-1.13
4. Any man who is able and willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding.	4.15	4.08	1.52
5. If one works hard enough he is likely to make a good life for himself.	3.65	3.52	2.40*
6. Hard work offers little guarantee of success.	3.39	3.57	-2.67**
7. The most difficult school courses turn out to be the most rewarding.	2.68	2.64	0.80
8. There are few satisfactions equal to the realization that one has done his best.	3.75	3.77	-0.25
9. A distaste for hard work usually reflects a weakness of character.	3.50	3.44	1.11
10. Most people who don't succeed in life are just plain lazy.	2.76	2.61	2.06*
11. People who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough.	3.41	2.98	6.60***
12. The man who can approach an unpleasant task with enthusiasm is the man who gets ahead.	3.42	3.23	3.35***

Note: Means were calculated from Likert scale scores, i.e., 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Table 3: Japanese Sex Differences in Values Related to Asceticism and Leisure

Asceticism, Thrift, Credit, Leisure	Men (n = 433) Mean	Women (n = 481) Mean	t
1. I would be more successful if I sacrificed certain pleasures.	3.10	2.90	3.31**
2. Life would have very little meaning if we never had to suffer.	3.97	4.01	-0.78
3. The self-made man is likely to be more ethical than the man born to wealth.	2.93	3.15	-3.43***
4. Money acquired easily (e.g., via gambling or speculation) is usually spent unwisely.	3.95	3.77	3.05**
5. The credit card is a ticket to careless spending.	3.39	3.57	-2.67**
6. Society would have fewer problems if people had less leisure time.	2.45	2.46	-0.13
7. Most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusements.	2.91	2.73	2.90**
8. Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time.	3.61	3.47	2.63**
9. People should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation.	4.06	4.10	-0.99
10. I feel uneasy when there is little work for me to do.	3.80	3.70	1.92

Note: Means were calculated from Likert scale scores, i.e., 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.